

### Background

Communities of Opportunity (COO) has the ambitious goal of creating greater health, social, economic, and racial equity in King County so that all people thrive and prosper. We recognize that the region's overall high quality of life is masking profound differences by place and race – differences that affect the well-being and prosperity of our entire region.

While working on these issues is not new, *how* it's being approached is what is transformative. In its first year, this new partnership has gained significant positive momentum—engaging community, refining its framework, and convening initial funding partners. We're excited to share the progress and to preview what's ahead.

COO is an effort launched by [The Seattle Foundation](#) and [King County](#) with support from Living Cities in March 2014 to improve health, housing and economic outcomes by focusing on *place*, and to do so by partnering with communities to shape and own solutions.

### What makes Communities of Opportunity different from past efforts?

COO seeks to change the way today's maps of health, social, and economic indicators look. To do that, these three mechanisms underpin *how* COO works:

- ✓ **Catalysts.** First, the scope and scale of the issues to be addressed are so complex that solutions will only happen through better alignment of funding streams and community resources. Grants alone are not enough. COO brings additional investment to develop this alignment, so local partners can better coordinate what's already under way to produce greater impact. In addition, institutional partners will look at changing their own policies and practices to increase equity in our communities.
- ✓ **Collaboration.** Second, a place-based approach can succeed only through collaboration across different sectors and the players who have a stake in it. Solutions are bigger than what any one organization can achieve on its own. Finding new allies with common interests and the financial and social resources to make changes is a central part of the work.
- ✓ **Community ownership.** Third, sustainability and results are possible only with community ownership of issues and solutions. Allowing for the space, time, and resources so that ownership can flourish is essential.

### **GETTING STARTED: Setting the stage with policy and system change support**

- ✓ In October 2014, The Seattle Foundation and King County announced a first round of policy, systems and capacity building work that engages or is led by affected communities. Over 90 organizations applied and more than \$1 million in grants was awarded to 12 organizations for policy and system change work and an additional eight organizations received capacity building support.

### **GETTING FOCUSED: Place-based investments in 3 communities (neighborhoods or cities).**

- ✓ The heart of COO is a multi-year partnership with a limited set of geographic areas – initially the focus will be three places. Our theory is that lasting, effective solutions to inequities can be achieved only when they are informed by the people affected by them and when those people have the capacity to influence changes necessary to improve outcomes.
- ✓ Almost 20 Letters of Interest (LOI) were submitted in November 2014 to be one of the three communities. A Review Panel and the Communities of Opportunity Interim Governance Group selected three sites which were announced on February 10, 2015: Rainier Valley/Southeast Seattle through HomeSight, SeaTac/Tukwila through Global to Local and White Center unincorporated area through the White Center Community Development Association.
- ✓ The intent is that this initial set of partner communities will set the stage for expansion to deeper investment, other locations and regional supports, as we learn together about what works.

### **GETTING BROADER: Tool kits and a learning community for all neighborhoods**

- ✓ Many places throughout King County are interested in shaping their communities to foster health and well-being for all residents.
- ✓ Communities of Opportunity will make toolkits broadly available of best practices in community-level strategies to improve health, housing and economic opportunity. An inclusive Learning Community will be convened twice per year on topics of interest, and early planning is underway for a gathering on community engagement in early fall 2015.

### **How did COO start?**

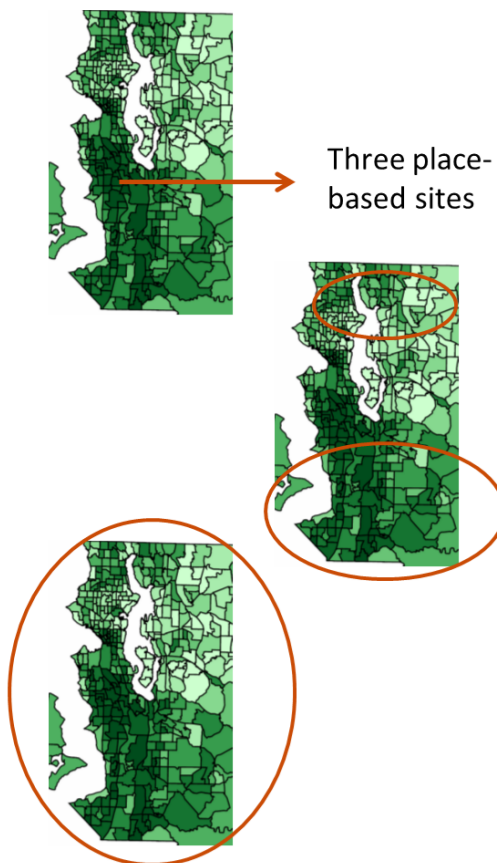
- In 2013, at The Seattle Foundation, its Center for Community Partnerships was crafting a neighborhood partnership initiative to address economic and racial equity. At King County, a Health and Human Services Transformation Plan—championed by County Executive Dow Constantine in partnership with the King County Council—was proposing the launch of a place-based initiative to address the region's troubling inequities following a 12/3/13 forum co-sponsored with the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank.

- Rather than proceed with separate parallel efforts, The Seattle Foundation and King County joined forces in March 2014 to launch COO. They applied together to Living Cities' Integration Initiative. The Seattle Foundation committed \$2.5 million over five years. King County committed resources from a \$500,000 "catalyst fund" included in the 2014 budget. King County also aligned public health and community development federal resources to COO, through Partnerships to Improve Community Health and Community Development Block Grants.
- Throughout 2014, a dedicated group of community partners came together to work on the initial design of the COO, charting a course that would build community-owned strategies. An 11-person group of community and institutional partners is now designated as an Interim Governance Group for COO.

For more information, contact either of the COO staff leads: Kirsten Wyses ([Kirsten.wyses@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Kirsten.wyses@kingcounty.gov)) or Alice Ito ([a.ito@seattlefoundation.org](mailto:a.ito@seattlefoundation.org)).

## Communities of Opportunity: 3 inter-locking parts

1. Use a mutual selection process to **identify three cities/neighborhoods** for focused investment
2. Work on **policy and system changes** that have cross-cutting benefits across many "dark green" areas
3. Use **toolkits and learning community** to support all areas of the county

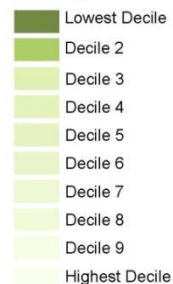


# KING COUNTY HEALTH, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY MEASURES

## Legend

— City Boundaries

## Ranking



## Population Measures

**Lowest  
ranked**

**Highest  
ranked**

## Life expectancy

74 years

87 years

## Health, broadly defined:

Adverse childhood  
experiences

20%

9%

Frequent mental  
distress

14%

4%

Smoking

20%

5%

Obesity

33%

14%

Diabetes

13%

5%

Preventable  
hospitalizations

1.0%

0.4%

## Housing:

Poor housing  
condition

8%

0%

## Economic opportunity:

Income below 200%  
poverty

54%

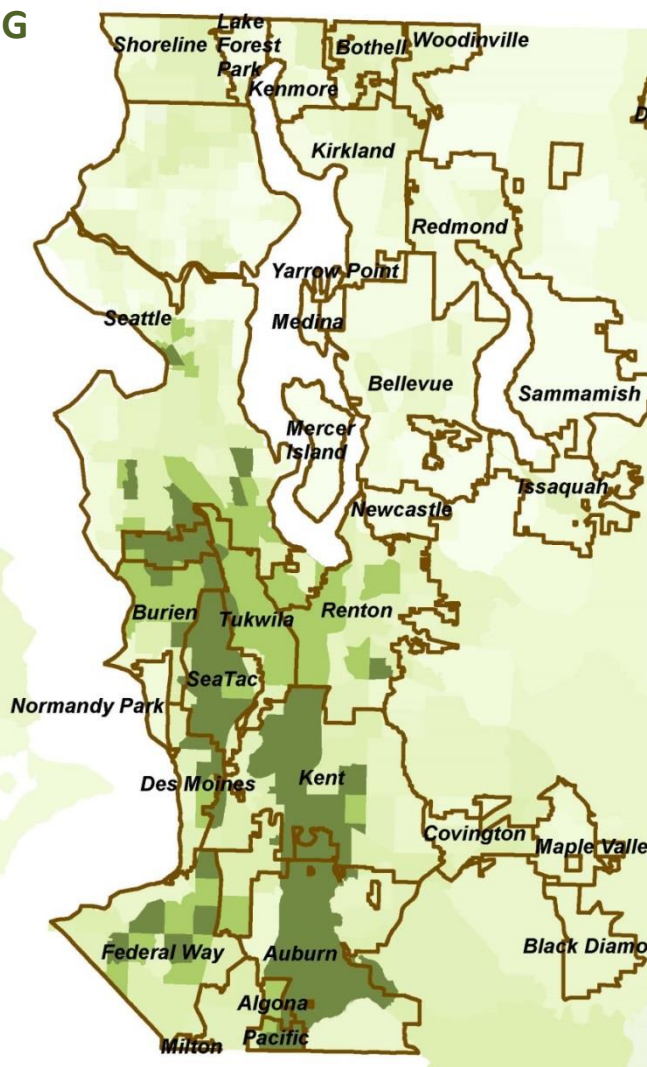
6%

Unemployment

13%

3%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, BRFSS and Vital Statistics / Produced by: Public Health - Seattle & King County



**Communities of Opportunity** is working in the 20% of census tracts (highlighted in the two darkest shades of green) that rank lowest on an index of the ten measures in the table below. There are almost 400 census tracts in King County and each has an approximate population size of 5,000.



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